

**Draft Strategic Plan  
2008 - 2013  
STATE FOREST PROPERTIES SECTION**

**MISSION OF THE PROPERTY SECTION**

The legislation that provides the foundation for the management of state forests (IC 14-23-4-1) states: *"It is the public policy of Indiana to protect and conserve the timber, water resources, wildlife, and topsoil in the forests owned and operated by the division of forestry for the equal enjoyment and guaranteed use of future generations. However, by the employment of good husbandry, timber that has a substantial commercial value may be removed in a manner that benefits the growth of saplings and other trees by thinnings, improvement cuttings, and harvest processes and at the same time provides a source of revenue to the state and counties and provides local markets with a further source of building material."*

The mission of the Division of Forestry Properties Section is:

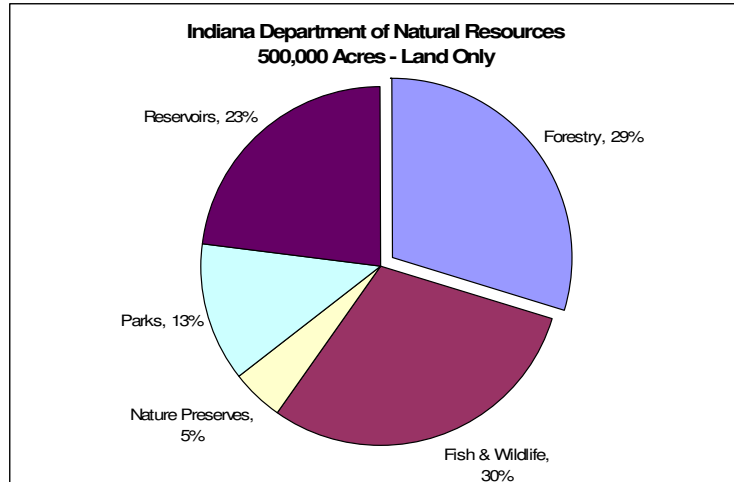
To manage, protect and conserve the timber, water, wildlife, soil and related forest resources for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations, and to demonstrate proper forest management to Indiana landowners. .

**VISION OF THE PROPERTY SECTION**

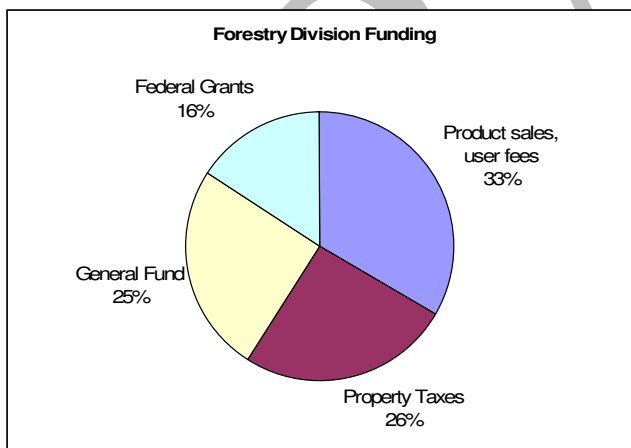
*We, the employees of the property section of the Division of Forestry, will demonstrate sound forest stewardship in our management of the Division's public forest lands. These lands will provide forest products, outdoor recreation, educational opportunities and other benefits, both tangible and intangible. We will conserve, protect, enhance and make available the varied forest resources of state forest properties for the present and future citizens of Indiana.*

**BACKGROUND**

The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages a total of 500,000 acres for the benefit of Indiana citizens. Each Division has its unique mission which collectively serves the Department's mission. The Division of Fish and Wildlife manages 21 Fish and Wildlife Areas for a total of 152,000 acres. These lands are intensively managed for improved wildlife habitat (both game and non-game) and for hunting and fishing opportunities.



Funding for acquisition and management of these lands comes primarily from federal grants, revenues from hunting and fishing licenses, and general funds. The Division of Nature Preserves manages 176 nature preserves that total more than 23,000 acres to maintain viable examples of all of Indiana's natural communities. These lands are protected or managed using natural forces with minimal levels of manipulative management. The Division of State Parks and Reservoirs manages 24 state parks and 9 reservoirs totaling 180,000 acres of land for public recreation, fishing and hunting opportunities. The Division of Forestry is the only DNR Division that incorporates active timber management program along with the management activities found within the other DNR landholding divisions.



Forestry Division funding comes from a variety of sources. A majority come from sources dedicated to the Division of Forestry, primarily sales of nursery and forest products, user fees and property taxes. Approximately 25% of funds come from the State's general fund. The federal grants are used for private landowner assistance and fire programs; no federal funds are used on State Forest Properties.

The Indiana state forest system consists of 13 properties containing 150,000 acres. This system was started in 1903 and was one of the first in the country. The state forests were initially created to restore eroded, worn-out land when small, subsistence farms began to be abandoned early in the century. Early state forest management focused on reforesting eroded area, creating wildlife habitat, demonstrating good forest land management, providing public recreation, and conserving forest resources.

This early philosophy is still a major part of our current management system. The state forests are managed for multiple uses/multiple benefits. The state forests provide outdoor recreation ranging from camping and hiking to hunting and caving. The state forests conserve and protect all the forest resources - water, wildlife, herbaceous plants, archaeological sites, historic features, geological features, soil, and forests. They serve as demonstrations of good forest stewardship for the public, and help train loggers and forest landowners in proper timber harvesting methods and other sound management practices.

Revenue from state forest timber sales and recreation receipts go into the state forestry fund. Fifteen percent (15%) of the net receipts from timber sales go to the general funds of the counties in which the timber sales occurred. Up to 50% of the county receipts are available to local Volunteer Fire Departments that have cooperative fire agreements with DNR up to a maximum of \$1,000 per fire department. The Property Section will continue to follow this historic path of resource conservation, protection, and education in the future. The direction of this path will be built on the section's seven primary program directions and their respective long-range goals, objectives, and action items.

## **GOALS and OBJECTIVES**

### **GOAL I: Protect and sustain all forest resources, including archeologically, historically or ecologically significant resources.**

- A. Efforts will be directed towards management of the forest resource for sustained timber production and enhanced wildlife habitat.
  - 1. Maintain annual timber harvest to no more than 12 million board feet. The average annual growth on state forests is 24,788,950 board feet, so this will represent an annual harvest of about 50% of annual growth.
  - 2. Establish a continuous forest inventory system that provides statistically significant resource data at the property level; measure 20% of field plots each year through 2012 (100% of plots visited by end of planning period)
  - 3. Past state forest management under the uneven-aged system has resulted in a stand structure moving toward mature, closed canopy with reduced biological diversity and early succession. The uneven-aged system will be modified to include more extensive individual tree selection to encourage more growth of crop trees and increased number and size (10 acres) of group openings to develop more early succession forests and wildlife habitat diversity. Utilize the evenaged regeneration practices where appropriate to successfully regenerate oak-hickory forests and provide early successional conditions as specified in the Habitat Conservation Plan for the Indiana bat.
  - 4. Dedicate timber sale revenues among the following project areas:
    - o Post harvest management activities and reinvestment into properties. This will include timber stand improvement work, control of exotic plants, and tree planting and plantation management to a lesser extent (Funding level - 10 %).

- Dispersed recreational facilities including horse, biking and walking trail maintenance and enhancement, user access development and associated recreation activities. (Funding level - 10 %).
  - Continuation of the forestry research/demonstration area on Yellowwood/Morgan-Monroe State Forest, and establishment of a second area at Harrison-Crawford or Clark State Forest. The research will focus on the effects of forest management (silviculture) on oak regeneration, water quality, forest sustainability, forest wildlife interactions and endangered species issues (Funding level - 12%).
  - Acquisition of tracts of land that are in-holdings, improve access, adjacent to state forest boundaries or possess unique natural resource or recreational qualities (Funding level – 38%). Conservative estimates are that the Division of Forestry could purchase over 2000 acres of land annually from willing sellers if the financial resources were available. Establishment of new state forests by purchasing large forest tracts through partnerships will be considered.
  - Funding of a state cost-share assistance program to enhance the management of private forestlands (Funding level - 15%).
  - Payments to counties (Funding level – 15%).
5. Maintain State Forest certification with Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). State forests management practices will be continually upgraded to meet evolving certification standards.
  6. Develop an aggressive program to locate and treat invasive exotic species on state forests utilizing mechanical or the least toxic chemical methods feasible. Eliminate Kudzu from state forest properties; emphasize control of Ailanthus, bush honeysuckle, autumn olive and Japanese stiltgrass by retreating previously treated areas. Routinely evaluate and control as necessary exotic plants in areas to be harvested.
- B. Locate, evaluate, preserve, and (where appropriate) interpret archeologically, historically or ecologically significant resources.
1. By December 2008, develop an improved process to identify and designate forest types and communities that have High Conservation Values, and begin to designate those areas.
  2. Work toward a long term balance in forest stand ages and structure with 10% of forest acreage in or developing “old growth”, nature preserves, or otherwise reserved from timber harvest.
  3. Require that every project be reviewed by the DoF Archaeologist to avoid significant impact on cultural and archaeological resources. Protect and where appropriate interpret those resources identified.
  4. Develop research to add significant data to the archaeological record. The project should locate and map rock shelters or Woodland utilization on upland ridges on multiple properties.
  5. Develop and implement a plan to restore cemeteries on the State Forest. This project would focus on completing a detailed description of each

cemetery, removing overgrown brush and trees, and, when feasible, repairing broken stones.

## **GOAL II: Provide forest based recreational opportunities**

- A. Upgrade the Division of Forestry's two modern state recreation areas – Starve Hollow and Deam Lake.
1. Use of Starve Hollow SRA has been steadily increasing over the past couple of years. The fishing lake, campsites on the lake and beach are the reasons that people come to the property. Camping at Starve Hollow could be increased by upgrading the campsites. During 2007-08, the Class B campsites along the lake will be upgraded to Class A (electric at each site), and the Class A sites will be upgraded to Class AA (water and sewer at each site).
  2. The Deam Lake SRA campground is under-used and rarely full. It is adjacent to the 80 mile horse trail system on Clark State Forest. We are converting a portion of the existing Class A campground to a horse campground. The campground is presently open to horses, and the project should be completed in 2008.
  3. All of the Division of Forestry lakes are man made, and most are over 60 years old. Over time, many of the lakes have become increasingly filled with sediment from adjacent agricultural fields, and are becoming increasingly filled with weeds and algae. Yellowwood and Starve Hollow Lakes are examples of this. DoF has obtained a dredge machine from the Department of Corrections and will begin dredging these lakes. Yellowwood Lake will be the first to be dredged followed by Starve Hollow Lake and Ferdinand Lake.
- B. State forests will continue to provide primitive outdoor recreation opportunities, which includes hunting, hiking, horseback riding, picnicking and primitive camping. Clark State Forest provides a shooting range. An archery range is provided on Greene-Sullivan SF. Archery ranges are provided on other state forests where local archery groups volunteer to help construct and maintain the ranges. There are archery ranges on Clark SF and Jackson-Washington SF that local archery groups have abandoned.
1. Efforts will continue to maintain these facilities at the highest quality possible.
  2. Locate and acquire at least one additional state forest in the northern or western part of the state from willing sellers as soon as possible within funding availability.
  3. Develop a system-wide recreation plan that provides an array of recreational opportunities and levels of development from basic to modern, based in part on the results of user opinion surveys, and begin implementation.

**Goal III: Provide information and educational opportunities to the public and develop an improved process to determine public attitudes, needs and desires.**

**A. Information and education activities should focus on the following**

1. Develop a “marketing plan” that informs users of the source of funding to pay for facilities.
2. Increase awareness of exotic plant problems and methods to minimize spread.
3. Employ a full-time naturalist to coordinate information and education efforts at Deam Lake and Starve Hollow State Recreation Areas.
4. Share information and work cooperatively with neighboring landowners on resource issues that cross ownership lines, especially protection of water quality and exotic species control.
5. Develop a history trail that would highlight the history of the State Forest System. Signs should interpret historic or archeological features such as a prehistoric extractive camp, historic homesite/farmstead, cottage industry, CCC camp, and perhaps a modern facility, possibly to land use change.
6. Develop a traveling display to showcase material from the State Forests.
7. Identify and develop means to preserve cultural resources that are endangered, such as lime kilns that are eroding into the Ohio River.

**B. Utilize existing and create additional methods to solicit meaningful input from Indiana landowners or residents.**

1. By July 2009, provide access to state forest management procedures, management plans, harvest plans, and the results of monitoring activities to the public via internet, and update monthly thereafter.
2. Conduct (or fund) a user survey at one property each year through 2013 to determine the number of users, nature of use, extent of visit, opinions about the quality of facilities, needs and expectations.
3. Regionalize but continue the open house at properties, offering open houses at varied times (day, evening, weekends) and at locations more convenient to the public (nearby cities rather than property offices).
4. During 2008-2013, conduct at least one public meeting, public input session or open house within 20 miles of each Indiana city of population 20,000 or greater, in conjunction with other Division of Forestry sections.
5. Contact non-federally recognized Indian Tribes currently residing in Indiana, the Indiana Native American Council, and federally recognized Tribes in adjacent states to invite their participation in planning processes for state forests, particularly planning related to identification and protection of Tribal resources, including cultural and archaeological sites.
6. By July 2009, provide explicit opportunities to the public to offer input on identifying, designating, and managing High Conservation Value Forests.

**Goal IV: Conserve and manage state forest habitat for fish and wildlife**

1. By July 2008, develop and distribute tract or stand level guidelines for cavity trees, down dead woody and other in-stand wildlife habitat elements, and train field personnel on inventory and management of these elements by July 2009.
2. Hire a Wildlife Biologist within the Division of Forestry to provide expertise with the management of state forests.
3. Complete the Habitat Conservation Plan by July 2008 and begin implementation.
4. By January 2009, each property will have a wildlife habitat management plan which will include management of T&E species

**Goal V: Evaluate and modify administrative procedures and organizational structure to improve management efficiency and effectiveness.**

- A. Increase organizational efficiency by:
  1. Consolidate field administrative structure by reducing the number of Property Managers by placing Deam Lake SRA and Clark SF under one Property Manager and Starve Hollow SRA and Jackson-Washington SF under one Property Manager.
  2. Increase the number of DoF field foresters to insure that timber management activities remain at the highest quality possible by upgrade or reclassification of existing DoF positions.
  3. Implement the training plan for professional property section staff as necessary to assure that professional staff members meet the Society of American Foresters Certified Forester standards by January 2009, and explore (and implement as available) financial or other incentives to encourage professional staff to become SAF Certified Foresters.
  4. Ensure that each Property Manager fully understand the Principles and Criteria of the Forest Stewardship Council Lake States and Central Hardwood Regional Standard.
  5. Encourage chain-of-custody procedures for state forest timber by sponsoring training to loggers by December 2009, including DoF's FSC and SFI certification/registration numbers on timber sale documents by July 2008.
- B. Explore new or innovative ways to maintain or increase funding
  1. Determine feasibility of recreation user fees and implement a fair user fee structure to recover a portion of the operating cost of recreational facilities.
  2. Continue timber harvesting program to provide revenue to the Division while limiting harvest to no more than 60% of net growth through 2012.
  3. Investigate opportunities to provide carbon credits to Indiana businesses.

Comments may be sent to [forestryinfo@dnr.IN.gov](mailto:forestryinfo@dnr.IN.gov) on or before December 1, 2007  
Please indicate "State Forest Properties Strategic Plan" in the subject line of your e-mail.